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## Hard Rock unveils casino plans for West Springfield

WEST SPRINGFIELD — In a glitzy ceremony replete with a rock concert and glass cases full of music memorabilia, Hard Rock International today unveiled a proposal for a casino complex that could cost \$700 million to \$800 million at the Eastern States Exposition fairgrounds in West Springfield, home of The Big E agricultural fair.

Forty acres of the 175-acre fairgrounds would be dedicated to the new resort, said Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock. The project will include shops and restaurants, a hotel, a rooftop pool, a spa, a concert venue, and 25,000 square feet of convention space, Allen said.

Hard Rock has submitted a \$400,000 non-refundable application fee to the state, officials said.

The deal between Hard Rock and the Exposition was announced at a red carpet event at the fairgrounds that featured a real red carpet and a rock performance by Bret Michaels of Poison.

The event also featured several pieces of music memorabilia in display cases, including a bass guitar used in concert by Gene Simmons of KISS, a drum set from Joey Kramer of Aerosmith, a leisure suit worn by Peter Frampton, and Michael Jackson's red leather "Beat It" jacket.

Hard Rock joins a crowded field competing for a casino license for Western Massachusetts. It will compete against MGM Resorts and Penn National Gaming, which each have plans for Springfield resorts, and Mohegan Sun, which has proposed a casino in Palmer.

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